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From anti-war protest to resistance

West Coast ports shut on May Day

By Clarence Thomas

The writer is a Local 10, ILWU Executive Board member; Co-chair, Port Workers' May Day Organizing Committee; and National Co-chair, Million Worker March Movement.

The International Longshore & Warehouse Union (ILWU), known for its militant and democratic traditions as well as its economic and social justice activism, has written a new chapter in its glorious labor history by shutting down all 29 ports on the West Coast for eight hours on May Day.

This historic and courageous action on the part of the ILWU came about as the result of a "No Peace No Work Holiday" resolution adopted by the Longshore Division Caucus, its highest ruling body, in February. The caucus passed this resolution by an overwhelming majority of the 100 longshore delegates representing all locals on the West Coast.

This resolution demanded "an immediate end to the war and occupation in Iraq and Afghanistan and the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the Middle East." It also asked the AFL-CIO and Change to Win for "an urgent appeal for unity and action" to end the war. The resolution further included a request for a May 1 coastwide stop-work union meeting to accommodate the closure of the ports. Contractually, the ILWU is entitled to one stop-work meeting a month to address union business.

The Pacific Maritime Association (PMA), which represents shippers, stevedoring companies and terminal operators, and negotiates labor contracts on their behalf, denied the request for a coastwide union meeting for May 1. Such requests have been honored in the past with advance notice. (PMA received nearly three months advanced notice and still denied the request.)

The rank and file proceeded with plans for a stop-work shutdown even though the International leadership withdrew its request to the PMA for the May 1 coastwide meeting.

PMA then insisted that the union leadership notify its members of the withdrawal of the request for May Day. The PMA even went to an arbitrator to force the union leaders to do this. The arbitrator ruled that the union is obligated to notify members that the union's request had been withdrawn.

None of this pressure weakened the resolve of the rank and file, who organized marches, rallies and other demonstrations in San Francisco and the Pacific Northwest. Union locals continued to prepare for the May Day action.

In San Francisco, Local 10 members organized the Port Workers' May Day Organizing Committee, made up of union members, immigrant rights, and anti-war and social justice groups. In the Pacific Northwest, May Day organizing groups were headed up by rank and filers: Gabriel Prawl of Local 19 Executive Board in Seattle; and in Portland Local 8 members Jerry Lawrence, member of the Executive Board, and Debbie Stringfellow.

Anti-war solidarity from West Coast to Iraq

There were numerous solidarity statements not just from trade unionists but a wide array of individuals and organizations from around the world in support of ILWU's unprecedented planned action. The first was called by the National Association of Letter Carriers locals observing two minutes of silence in all carrier stations at 8:15 a.m. on May 1 in solidarity with the ILWU action. Independent port truckers on the West Coast were

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Mass Sean Bell actions disrupt NYC

After judge lets off killer cops

Protesters getting arrested including Sara Flounders, wearing glasses, to left. NYPD bus at One Police Plaza, above. Sean Bell's, fiancée, Nicole Paultre-Bell, at right.

New York, May 7: Many hundreds of people carried out massive protests and civil disobedience today, during the afternoon of a work day, in at least six key bridge and tunnel crossroads of New York City to demand justice for Sean Bell, the 23-year-old African American who was killed in a hail of 50 New York Police Department bullets in November 2006 in Jamaica, Queens, N.Y. The Rev. Al Sharpton and his group, National Action Network, initiated the actions with the support of the Bell family. The Bell case has become a rallying cry against rampant police brutality around the country.

Hundreds of people volunteered to get arrested on "disorderly conduct" charges for blocking streets and traffic to express outrage at Judge Arthur Cooperman's not guilty verdict on April 25 in a Queens, N.Y. courtroom against three cops who were responsible for cutting short Bell's life. At One Police Plaza, at least a hundred people got arrested including Sharpton and Bell's fiancée, Nicole Paultre-Bell. Also arrested were International Action Center activists Sara Flounders and Dolores Cox. As people were being handcuffed and put in paddy wagons and buses, supporters chanted, "No justice, No peace"; "We are all Sean Bell" and "50 shots." Protest actions took place at five other sites, including the Queensboro Bridge, the Midtown Tunnel and in Brooklyn and in Harlem, where an estimated 1,000 people turned out.

—Report and photos by Monica Moorehead

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Appeal to baseball fans

Protest 'blacklisting' of Barry Bonds

By Mike Gimbel

The following appeal against the "blacklisting" of Barry Bonds has recently been circulating throughout the media. The appeal has been posted by The Black Commentator, Black Athlete Sports Network, and San Francisco Bay View Web sites as well as the Baseball Think Factory Newsblog. These postings resulted in a number of supportive e-mails from readers. The writer is a former consultant on player evaluation for the Boston Red Sox and the Montreal Expos.

How is it possible for the best hitter in the National League in 2007, Barry Bonds, to be unable to find a job with any team in Major League Baseball in 2008? How is it possible for the greatest hitter in the history of MLB, Barry Bonds, after being the best hitter in the NL in 2007, to be unable to get a job with any MLB team in 2008?

Here's my computed Run Production Averages (RPA), see table, for the top 27 hitters in MLB's 2007 season (minimum 400 computed plate appearances, as per RPA method). My method shows the season-adjusted value of each plate appearance in terms of the runs produced by that batter per the RPA formula that I previously described in my annual player rating books.

Run Production Averages (RPA) for the top 27 hitters in MLB's 2007 season *(minimum 400 computed plate appearances, as per RPA method).*

Alex Rodriguez	205
Carlos Pena	205
Barry Bonds	204
Chipper Jones	197
David Ortiz	194
David Wright	190
Jack Cust	185
Ryan Braun	183
Prince Fielder	176
Jim Thome	176
Magglio Ordonez	175
Curtis Granderson	175
Mark Teixeira	174
Hanley Ramirez	173
Adam Dunn	171
Chase Utley	171
Rickie Weeks	171
Grady Sizemore	170
Albert Pujols	169
Chris Duncan	168
Matt Holliday	167
Carlos Beltran	167
Corey Hart	165
Jorge Posada	163
Lance Berkman	162
Pat Burrell	162
Chone Figgins	160

Are you going to tell me that there isn't a single team that could use Bonds' big bat? Tell me just one team that doesn't have room on their 25-man roster for the greatest hitter in MLB history! Bonds has not been convicted of anything. He has not been accused of betting on games or throwing games. He has not been accused of assaulting anyone. Bonds has been accused of not being a nice guy by the media, but is that a crime?

Bonds has been accused of not telling the truth to a grand jury investigating BALCO. He does not own BALCO and does not distribute steroids on behalf of BALCO. Why was the grand jury investigating Bonds? Weren't they supposed to be investigating BALCO? How did that "investigation" of BALCO turn into a witch hunt directed against MLB players? Clearly, BALCO wasn't the real target in the racist campaign against Bonds.

I am my union's delegate to the New York City Central Labor Council. During my union work I have been a grievance representative. I have often represented union members who have been brought up on charges for both minor and major infractions. Members could get fired for directly disobeying an order or for incompetence or for various serious infractions. The only time that the member faced suspension, however, was when the member posed an immediate danger.

What "immediate danger" to MLB does Barry Bonds pose that requires Bonds' suspension prior to a decision in Bonds' upcoming trial? In fact, wouldn't the presence of Bonds on a MLB team roster—the Baltimore Orioles, for instance—be an immediate big boost to that team's attendance as well as a big boost to their chances of winning?

In effect, MLB teams are willing to lose money rather than hire Bonds. Isn't that the definition of a "blacklist"? The actors, singers, directors, etc., who were "blacklisted" during the McCarthy era witch hunt were money makers for the entertainment industry, yet no owner would hire them! Isn't that exactly what is happening with Bonds?

Weren't many of these talented performers indicted and some convicted for refusing to cooperate with grand juries and dragged before government-staged hearings in front of hundreds of cameras and reporters? Years later many of those "blacklisted" were apologized to, but did that apology make up for the destruction of their livelihoods and their personal lives during the McCarthy "blacklisting"? Of course not!

I have a special disgust for the owners of the San Francisco Giants. They made millions of dollars off of Barry Bonds. They were able to build a moneymaking stadium based, to a great extent, on Bonds. Where is their gratitude? Nowhere! He was their star player who was loved by the fans in the Bay Area, yet the Giants' team owners shamefully released Bonds after the 2007 season so as to do their part in the "blacklisting"! They deserve a "Hall of Shame" of their own!

Years from now, when MLB is forced to apologize to Bonds for their actions, that apology will never make up for the crime that it is inflicting today on him and on the many fans who admire the athletic greatness that Bonds has personified as a player. I also admire him for his unbending, "in your face" attitude, as he's been enduring this constant attack from the big business media, especially the sports talk radio and cable channels that have to fill 24-hour-a-day air time by creating controversy and scandal where there would have been little or none before those media outlets were created.

The following wording could be used for a petition to be circulated inside and outside stadiums to all concerned fans: "I appeal to the fans of MLB to bombard their team owners with letters and e-mails and petitions demanding that their team hire Barry Bonds. Imagine, for instance, Bonds added to the roster of the woeful offense of the Baltimore Orioles. Imagine the magical confrontations in the American League East with David Ortiz and Manny Ramirez at Fenway Park and Camden Yards and with Alex Rodriguez and Derek Jeter at Yankee Stadium and Camden Yards. Wouldn't that do wonders for attendance for a Baltimore Orioles franchise that has been down in the dumps for so long?

"An historic wrong is being committed by the owners. Do we want to have a posthumous apology to Barry Bonds, as was done for Jim Thorpe, or do we correct this wrong *NOW*? Bonds is this era's Babe Ruth. He's the biggest star in our national pastime!"

While ending the Iraq occupation and fighting for a moratorium on home foreclosures take precedence, millions of you will still be in attendance at MLB games. While there, couldn't you also do your part in fighting against the shameful "blacklisting" of Barry Bonds, the greatest hitter in MLB history? I want to see Barry Bonds playing baseball in 2008! □

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Jobless rate hits 9.2 percent in April

By Gary Wilson

Jobs continued to disappear in April, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The official unemployment rate is 5 percent. For the last 5 months, private employment has gone down.

More than 800,000 workers have lost their jobs during the last year. Long term joblessness is deepening. That's the people who've been without a job for more than 6 months. That's now over 1.3 million workers, more than one in every six unemployed workers. At the current rate, another 3 million will be part of this group of long-term jobless by the end of the year.

"The Labor Department's most comprehensive alternative unemployment rate measure—which includes people who want to work but are discouraged from looking as well as people working part time because they can't find full-time jobs—edged up in April and, at 9.2 percent, is nearly two percentage points higher than at the start of the last recession," says Chad Stone, chief economist at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

What does Stone mean by an alternative unemployment rate?

The Labor Department quietly provides an alternative set of figures to the economists and businesses, but these numbers never make the media reports nor are mentioned by the politicians, Republican or Democratic.

This alternative rate of 9.2 percent includes what they call "discouraged" workers. That's workers who are not able to actively look for a job because they don't have child care available or don't have access to transportation. It does not include those jobless who went into the military because they couldn't find a job or the 2 million prisoners. For unemployed youth, prison has become the government's jobs program.

Kevin Phillips, in a report titled "Numbers Racket" in Harper's Magazine, writes that this alternative index is the real world figure, but that the lower numbers are used to cover up the depth of the economic crisis.

"The real numbers, to most economically minded Americans, would be a face full of cold water. Based on the criteria in place a quarter century ago, today's U.S. unemployment rate is somewhere between 9 percent and 12 percent; the inflation rate is as high as 7 or even 10 percent; economic growth since the recession of 2001 has been mediocre, despite a huge surge in the wealth and incomes of the superrich," Phillips says.

Phillips says that this big distortion of the unemployment figures was introduced by the Clinton administration. "Despite the present Bush administration's overall penchant for manipulating data (e.g., Iraq, climate change), it has yet to match its predecessor in economic revisions," Phillips writes.

It was the Clinton administration that had long-term unemployed removed from the official count of jobless workers, immediately removing 4 million from the count in 1994. And by removing households in the inner cities from the monthly sample, the Clinton administration made the official unemployment figure go down even more. □

High prices, shrinking wages & juicy profits

By Deirdre Griswold

The working class everywhere is taking a huge pay cut. It comes in the form of high prices for necessities, especially food and fuel, and is affecting workers, the unemployed, seniors and anyone else who has to pay for living expenses—from Albuquerque, N.M., to Nairobi, Kenya, to Jakarta, Indonesia.

In the United States, the prices of wheat and soybeans have doubled in the last year while corn and milk have gone up by about 25 percent. Meat and eggs, both dependent on grain for feed, have followed suit.

But a comparison with last year doesn't tell the whole story, because 2007 was itself a year of big inflation in food prices.

The steep rise in gasoline prices is also tearing a huge hole in many workers' budgets, since U.S. public transportation is woefully inadequate, even though the population is very spread out and people often live far from where they work, shop and go to school. And then there's the rising cost of heating oil.

It all adds up to big problems for the working class, especially those already living near the edge. And it comes at a time when workers' real wages and incomes are continuing the long slide downward that started over 30 years ago.

You don't have to read an article to know this. You're living it already. But you may want to know why this is happening, and what can be done about it.

The first thing to know is that rising prices are not inevitable. Countries with planned—i.e., socialist—economies have kept prices remarkably stable, beginning with the Soviet Union, continuing with People's China, until it opened up to the world capitalist market, and still in Cuba and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea today. This is because prices there have been set not by a capitalist market but by the government—and food prices have always been set deliberately low so that no one goes hungry.

All the socialist revolutions have occurred in the less-developed countries—that's where mass struggle has been the greatest and the capitalist class the weakest—yet they achieved an end to hunger despite starting from a very low productive base. However, their underdevelopment left them vulnerable to intense military and economic pressure from the imperialist countries.

What's so striking—really amazing—about a country like the U.S. is that hunger is growing here amid great abundance. Workers' wages have been going down even though productivity continues to advance, and the assets of individual wealthy people are now measured in billions and even hundreds of billions of dollars. Homelessness is rising as the inventory of unsold, brand-new, single-family homes remains at around half a million, despite a 13 percent decline in the median price for these homes over the last year.

Look around any supermarket. There's no shortage of meats, grain, fresh fruits and vegetables or dairy products. And the workers who do the sowing, picking, processing, slaughtering and transporting of these foodstuffs aren't making any more money than before—whether they work in the U.S. or in South America.

So where is the extra money you are paying at the cash register going?

The excuse given for the high prices is that oil now costs a lot more than it used to. And that's true. In fact, the price of oil on the futures market just hit $120 a barrel. But don't blame the oil-producing countries. They are only one small part of the process by which petroleum products reach the market. The major players are the giant transnational oil monopolies. And, at a time of economic downturn, their profits are still in the fabulous range.

Take Exxon Mobil. It reported profits of nearly $11 billion in the first quarter of this year—a 17-percent increase over the same period last year. Now that's nice. Wouldn't you like to get a 17-percent raise? But evidently that didn't satisfy Wall Street investors, who were expecting more and sent the company's stock down on the news. They had been hoping for at least $11.7 billion, which the company earned in the last quarter of 2007.

But what about agribusiness, which is directly bringing us high prices? The biggest U.S. agricultural company, Cargill, reported in mid-April that its profit of $1.03 billion in the first quarter was an increase of 86 percent from that of a year ago.

Archer Daniels Midland, another grain monopoly that is benefiting from the growing ethanol market, said its earnings rose to $517 million in the quarter ending March 31—a 42-percent jump over last year.

One-fourth of the corn grown in the U.S. is now being used to produce ethanol. This diversion of land away from food crops is contributing to the spike in world food prices. Adding ethanol to gas was supposed to overcome shortages and keep fuel prices down. Obviously, it hasn't.

The lesson should be clear: the capitalist market doesn't solve the workers' problems. In fact, it causes them. A "tax holiday" on gas over the summer, as some candidates are proposing, is a teeny-tiny band-aid over a gaping problem and would leave the state budgets in even worse shape.

Let's face it. We need a revolution to get rid of the corporate parasites and reorganize society to meet people's needs. In a time of awesome global climate change, expanding imperialist wars, and now a serious recession or depression in the works, nothing less will do.

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American Axle strike in 11th week

The strikers at American Axle Manufacturing and Holdings (AAM) are still standing firm and are fighting against any concessions as they enter their 11th week on strike. And support continues to roll in from labor-community-student organizations.

The Michigan Committee Against War and Injustice (MECAWI) was out on their solidarity day on May 4. MECAWI has chosen Sunday afternoons for its members to come as a group to support the strikers. Individual members stop by the picket line daily. Other community organizations, such as Michigan Welfare Rights, are engaging in similar group action on Tuesdays.

Kim Greene of MECAWI, who has participated on the picket line at various times, told Workers World, "Our group is about supporting what we consider any injustice in the world and we consider what's happening to the strikers unjust, so we're out here to support them in any way we can."

Auto workers have been striking since Feb. 26. WW PHOTO: ALAN POLLOCK

UNITE HERE brought a delegation to the AAM picket line in Detroit on May 5. This labor solidarity happens daily as UAW members and other union members throughout the Midwest and beyond stop by the picket lines and drop off provisions at the union hall to support their sisters and brothers at AAM.

The UAW has also been on strike for three weeks at the Lansing, Mich., Delta Township crossover assembly plant, which produces Buick Enclave, GMC Acadia and Saturn Outlook, and has just begun a strike at the plant in Kansas that produces the Malibu line.

—Bryan G. Pfeifer □

NORTH CAROLINA

Students arrested supporting workers' rights

By Linda Gomaa
Chapel Hill, N.C.

Gomaa is a member of Student Action with Workers at the University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill and the Raleigh/Durham/Chapel Hill chapter of the youth group FIST. She has been an active participant in sit-ins against sweatshops at UNC. The following is Gomaa's report of the arrest of students, in which she was singled out by police after making a press statement.

Five University of North Carolina students have been arrested after 16 days of peacefully occupying the office of UNC Chancellor James Moeser.

Students from Student Action with Workers (SAW) and the Carolina Sweatfree Coalition began the sit-in because the chancellor had been refusing, for three years, to meet with us as well as his own labor licensing committee to discuss UNC's ineffective labor codes. These codes still allow UNC apparel to be made under sweatshop conditions, including poverty wages and no freedom of association.

Because of the action of SAW and other student groups, Chancellor Moeser was forced to listen to the demands of the students and scheduled an emergency licensing committee meeting to discuss the Designated Suppliers Program. The DSP would ensure that labor codes that had been adopted by the university almost 10 years ago would be enforced.

The committee, however, had been advised by the chancellor to discuss options other than the DSP for the past year, so it was no surprise that when the committee met with the chancellor, many members expressed a lack of adequate knowledge about the program to make any informed decisions about its implementation. The committee voted 5 to 7, with two abstentions, against recommending the DSP. Only two students sit on the committee.

After the meeting was adjourned, the chancellor made it clear that he would not take a stand against the horrific conditions under which UNC apparel is manufactured. We refused to take his inaction as a defeat.

Moving from the meeting to the administration building lobby, I made a statement to the press, stressing that students would "not allow business as usual to continue" in the administration building while the chancellor's inaction allowed the continuation of sweatshop conditions for UNC garment workers. I said that students were asking the chancellor to allow UNC to live up to its title, "the university of the people," by improving conditions for all people, including UNC housekeepers, teaching assistants and adjunct professors, and the students holding jobs in order to pay for their education.

We then moved from the lobby into the chancellor's office. Several students sat in the office and linked arms, while others stood near the door. We chanted, "UNC sweat-free!" as the chancellor made a quick exit.

Police entered the room and the captain, giving no warning, pointed me out and had his officers arrest me, giving the rest of the students a warning and adequate time to leave the office. Four other students remained and were arrested, with UNC senior and SAW member Salma Mirza carried out by the police. We are charged with "failure to disperse" and Mirza carries an extra charge for "noncompliance" with the police.

Despite there being two police stations close to campus in Chapel Hill, we were transported to a further station in Hillsborough and were kept in handcuffs and zip-ties for two hours. Mirza's entire arm went numb before the officers finally cut the zip-ties off; and we all now have bruises around our wrists. The five of us are currently out of jail with a promise to appear in court over the summer.

Chancellor Moeser has expressed no remorse over his decision to arrest students rather than even discuss the option of enforcing labor codes which would grant UNC garment workers the right to fight for their basic human rights. He stated publicly that he was "disappointed" with our actions.

SAW has responded by stating that we "cannot begin to express our disappointment in the Chancellor of a university that calls itself 'the university of the people,' who would prefer to arrest peaceful student protesters instead of ensuring that there is justice for the workers who make this university run."

For more information visit dsp4unc.wordpress.com. □

Part-timers at Wayne State win contract

By Bryan G. Pfeifer

The Union of Part-Time Faculty at Wayne State University in Detroit made history April 30, when the union won a tentative agreement with the administration after an all-night marathon bargaining session.

The UPTF is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers and is one of the largest stand alone, part-time faculty units in the United States.

"The UPTF thanks all of our labor-community-student allies who have and continue to stand in solidarity with our union. We won our contract because of this support in tandem with our membership mobilization," said Amanda Hiber, UPTF communications committee chair and part-time faculty in the English department at WSU.

Contract details will be finalized the week of May 4, followed by a vote for union membership ratification. The tentative agreement must be affirmatively voted on by the board of governors at WSU, the governing body for the university. Once both happen the contract will be legally binding.

The UPTF win came just days after graduate assistants in the Graduate Employee Organization—AFT union at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor won significant gains after a one-day walkout; and Graduate Employees Union—AFT at Michigan State won a contract just minutes before walking out in late April.

Bargaining between the UPTF and the WSU administration began November 2007. After a multifaceted first contract campaign that included demonstrations, members packing the bargaining room, a nationwide letter/postcard campaign, media work and numerous other tactics, the union won critical job security language, wage increases and grievance/arbitration rights, among other gains. An administration-union committee will discuss benefits.

Before members formed their union, the 900 part-time faculty members at WSU were paid below-subsistence wages, had no benefits whatsoever and were classified as "at-will" employees. Thus the fight to win a first contract was and is fundamentally about dignity and respect.

The UPTF win at Wayne State is part of a burgeoning movement in recent years of unionization for both graduate teaching assistants and part-time faculty at private and public universities nationwide. These workers are unionizing in response to university administrators' hiring of multiple part-time faculty at low pay, no benefits and little professional needs provided, such as office space, in place of full-time tenured professors.

Furthermore, administrators are increasingly giving away millions in public taxpayer dollars to corporations, using universities for corporate welfare at the expense of poor and working people like those at WSU, a campus of 33,000 with a majority Black student population. This is happening at the same time that tuition, fees and student loan interest rates are rising astronomically, student loans are being denied to poor and working class students, and the war in Iraq is sucking billions out of educational and other human needs.

Those unionizing at campuses nationwide are not only fighting to improve their standard of living but are participating in an epic struggle to make universities responsive to the needs of the poor and working people who fund these critical institutions—and make them run. As in the UPTF, every day more campus workers are standing up, fighting back and declaring, "The university is ours and it works because we do!"

Bryan G. Pfeifer is the staff organizer for the Union of Part-Time Faculty—AFT, www.uptf.org.

West Coast ports shut on May Day

Continued from page 1

very active in taking on solidarity actions in support of the ILWU. In the ports of Newark and Elizabeth, N.J., as well as the port of Houston, independent truckers protested against higher gas prices and in support of the ILWU May Day action. In Seattle, students at the University of Seattle, University of Washington, and Seattle Central Community College left their respective campuses to hold their own rallies or join the march and rally of ILWU Local 19.

The ILWU action resonated so much in the community that one of the oldest movie theater venues in Oakland, Calif., the Grand Lake, had the following on its marquee for a week leading up to May Day, **"We Salute the Longshoremen's May Day Strike to Protest the Criminal Occupation of Iraq."** Due to its location near the central city thoroughfare, thousands of people could see the marquee on any given day.

ILWU Drill team on May Day, left. Danny Glover and Cindy Sheehan, below.

PHOTOS: DELORES LEMON -THOMAS

The most significant solidarity action of all came from Longshoremen in Iraq itself. Members of the Port Workers Union of Iraq shut down the Ports of Umn Qasr and Khor Alzubair for one hour on May Day in solidarity with the shutdown of all West Coast ports by members of the ILWU in opposition to the occupation of Iraq. This action was taken in defiance of the Ba'athist legislation of 1987, which banned trade unions in the public sector and public enterprise.

The General Union of Port Workers in Iraq sent this message to the ILWU: "The courageous decision you made to carry out a strike on May Day to protest against the war and occupation of Iraq advances our struggle against occupation to bring a better future for us and for the rest of the world as well."

There was a second solidarity message received from the Iraqi Labor Movement, a broad cross section of union leaders from many different unions and labor federations in Iraq. The message read in part, "On this day of international labor solidarity we call on our fellow trade unionists and all those worldwide who have stood against war and occupation to increase support for our struggle for freedom from occupation—both military and economic."

Jack Heyman, Local 10 Executive Board member and Co-Chair, Port Workers May Day Organizing Committee, was interviewed by Amy Goodman of Democracy Now! on May 2 about the significance of the May Day action. He responded to several of her questions in the following way: "We're really proud here on the West Coast as longshoremen. The ILWU is making a stand because it's part of our legacy, really for standing up on principled issues.

"This is the first stop work—work stoppage ever where workers were withholding their labor and demanding an end to the war and the immediate withdrawal of the troops. Not only did we defy the arbi-

High Court sets back right to vote

By Kathy Durkin

On April 28, the U.S. Supreme Court voted 6-3 in Crawford v. Marion County to uphold Indiana's strict voter photo identification requirement—a stunning blow against the right to vote.

The dissenting Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Stephen G. Breyer and David H. Souter compared the Indiana law to the old Virginia poll tax, and said it "[has] the object of deterring poorer residents from exercising the franchise." (New York Times, April 29)

The high court's biased decision means that thousands of Indiana's eligible voters who don't have drivers' licenses or passports, or the funds, transportation or means to obtain them, will be barred from voting.

John Payton of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund warns, "Thousands of otherwise eligible African Americans and other minority voters who would have wanted to participate in what is perhaps the most historic election in our lifetime will not be able to vote [in Indiana] under mandatory voter ID requirements." (naacpldf.org)

The Supreme Court's ruling has ominous national ramifications. It gives the green light to many other states to maintain or enact rigid voter identification requirements, thus discriminating against and effectively disenfranchising millions of people, especially those in poor and oppressed communities, the elderly, youth, women and the disabled.

Twenty-four states now require voter identifications; six of them, besides Indiana, require photo IDs. They are Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Louisiana, Michigan and South Dakota. Ten other states are considering such laws.

Therefore, the high court's ruling will impact on the more than 13 million people nationwide, mostly low-income, who have no government-issued IDs and who face a costly, laborious process to obtain them.

In Indiana, Republican legislators pushed through the voter requirements, which were opposed by Democrats. This is true throughout the country as the Republicans enact nefarious schemes and rules to conspire to keep out of the voting booths those who most likely would vote for Democratic candidates.

Although both are capitalist parties with imperialist foreign policies, the Democrats and Republicans have some tactical and social differences; the Democrats' base includes many people in organized labor and from oppressed communities.

The Republican Party has shown that it will do everything possible to suppress votes to win elections. In 2000 Republicans in the Florida presidential elections, with the complicity of state election officials, "stole" the vote by disenfranchising tens of thousands of African-American, Haitian and Spanish-speaking people.

The Indiana law and others requiring voter identification frontally attack the fundamental right to vote. This right was won by hard-fought struggle by the Civil Rights Movement, which sought to break the grip of white supremacy and racist Jim Crow laws in the South.

That monumental struggle pressured Congress into enacting the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which enabled many African-American people to vote and run for office, although the struggle is far from over.

The Voting Rights Act specified ending barriers to voting, such as harassment, poll taxes, English-only voting instructions, literacy tests, racist gerrymandering and other disenfranchisement tools. It forbid racial discrimination by governments to impede voters.

Now, instead of poll taxes and literacy tests, racist, reactionary forces are using voter identification laws to turn the clock back and undermine the gains made by the Civil Rights Movement, to win elections at a time when many are still struggling for the right to vote, including immigrants.

Hilary Shelton, NAACP Washington Bureau director, warned, "Mandated photo ID programs would create a modern-day poll tax for voters throughout the country. This is both discriminatory and inconsistent with historic policies to eliminate poll taxes."

The Supreme Court is itself a reactionary, undemocratic body, a pillar of the capitalist system which maintains class rule and privilege. It is only when the momentum of a mass movement pushes the government to grant rights or benefits that the court makes any progressive rulings, be it for civil liberties, civil rights or those of women or working people.

The right to vote should be inviolable. As part of the struggle for democratic rights it should be expanded to all who want to exercise it. This issue is even more highlighted this year when so many people are heartened by Barack Obama's candidacy.

Monica Moorehead wrote in Workers World, "The right to vote is a hard-won bourgeois democratic right that is still being denied to tens of millions of oppressed people, including immigrant workers. ...

"To forge class unity among workers of all nationalities, concrete support for the most marginalized and oppressed people must be mounted, including defending their right to vote, no matter who they vote for. The struggle for the right to vote is a continuation of earlier struggles to break the monopoly on the political process exercised by rich, white men of property." (Nov. 11, 2004)

The movement to abolish all restrictive voting requirements is part of the continuing overall struggle for social justice and to end all forms of discrimination. □

The dynamic poverty of the U.S. working class

Editor's note: Workers World is in its 50th year of publication. Throughout the year, we will share with our readers some of the paper's content over the past half century. Below are excerpts from an article by one of the party's founders and leaders, Vince Copeland, published Jan. 29, 1971. The entire article is on www.workers.org.

50 years
WORKERS WORLD 1971

By V. Copeland

Every worker in the United States, without exception, is poor. Compared to somebody else or something else, every worker, employed or unemployed, is deprived—and millions are living in misery and desperation.

How, in the richest country in the world, can such a thing be so?

First and foremost, the U.S. workers are the poorest in the world in relation to the mountains of wealth amassed from their labor—past and present—by the plutocratic ruling class.

Second, the workers are poorest in contrast to what they had yesterday (if they are unemployed, or if they are working at the same wages while inflation drives up their cost of living)—or in contrast to what they expect tomorrow from a system that literally promises them the moon and gives them a stone.

Third, they are poorest in contrast to each other—divided and thrown against one another, not only by race, sex, and nationality, but by piecework wages, false differentiation of skills, uneven rewards for difficult labor and constant reshuffling of incomes by the uneven pressure of their own better or worse organized strength and the sudden furies of recession, depression and/or automation in the ever expanding and contracting capitalist economy.

Every one of these factors is eventually reflected in the workers' minds—now faintly, now sharply and violently, although hardly ever fully articulated or understood, and much more reflected in sudden action than in long cogitated thought.

Dynamic degeneration

The poverty of the U.S. workers is more dynamic because the U.S. capitalist system, more dynamic in its rise, is also more dynamic in its degeneration than the capitalist system of any other country, not to mention earlier social systems, which were static indeed in comparison.

Degeneration, of course, is not usually thought of as "dynamic," but that is only because the degeneration of previous empires—unblessed by capitalism—took long centuries to consummate, whereas modern capitalism degenerates by expansion, contraction and explosion—all compressed into decades, and on occasion into far shorter periods.

The old systems did not rouse their own slaves to revolt against themselves with nearly the efficiency and thoroughness of the modern capitalists. They could not call into existence the strikes, general strikes, proletarian revolutions and colonial uprisings with anything like the power and frequency that modern capitalist imperialism can do.

This was largely because those systems could not organize the slaves into such powerful battalions under one roof. (General Motors alone has 340,000 slaves under its corporate roof today, for instance). And it was also largely because those systems could not arouse the expectations of their slaves, whereas the slaves of modern capitalism can see before their eyes the enormous production they are responsible for.

And if the modern slaves cannot see the full potential of their labor, unleashed from the restraining chains of the capitalist wage slave system, they can at least see the goods they feel they themselves are supposed to possess as part of the "American Way of Life." And when they are in danger of definitively losing these goods, their anger is aroused over some "small" loss like no slaves of the past—even those infinitely more oppressed, who were so often unable to fight for life itself. ...

The inevitable struggle

In spite of the chauvinism of so many of the U.S. workers toward their sisters and brothers in the U.S. colonies, they too must and will challenge the wealth and power of their own U.S. masters, who incidentally are the masters of the super-oppressed colonies, too. Thus the U.S. workers will help—knowingly or not—break the chains of the superoppressed and superpoor at home and abroad.

The possibilities of their doing this are in the long run greater, far greater than they seem, because of the dynamic poverty they undergo and because of the class power that is theirs. □

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trator, but in a certain sense we defied our own union officials. The union officials did not want to have the actions we organized up and down the coast despite the arbitrator's decision. Simply, we don't take our orders from the arbitrator—we don't take it from judges. The rank and file goes out and does what it has to do.

"We did that in 1984 during our struggle against apartheid when a ship came in from South Africa. We, Local 10 members, refused to work that ship for 10 days. That was in defiance of what the arbitrator said and what our union officials were telling us. So, we've got strong traditions in the ILWU, rank-and-file democracy where we implement what we decide in a democratic fashion."

In San Francisco, more than a thousand people marched from Local 10's union hall, led by the Local 10 Drill Team, along the Embarcadero where the 1934 Big Strike took place, to a noon rally at Justin Herman Plaza. Actor-activist Danny Glover; Cynthia McKinney, former congresswoman from Georgia; Cindy Sheehan, whose son was killed in Iraq; and many others spoke to the crowd.

Local 10 was the local of the legendary labor leader and founding member of the ILWU, Harry Bridges. Local 10 initiated the Million Worker March (MWM), which took place on Oct. 17, 2004, at the Lincoln Memorial. The MWM movement calls upon the rank and file of the labor movement, organized and unorganized, to wage a fight-back movement for the working class. One of the aims of the MWM following the 2004 mobilization was to reclaim May Day by reclaiming our proud history of struggle and social gains which International Workers' Day stands for.

Rallies, marches and resolutions all play an important role in terms of organizing, but the ILWU's May Day action of shutting down all 29 ports on the West Coast is an example of how workers can exercise their power in the workplace and move from protest to resistance. □

PHOTO: DELORES LEMON-THOMAS

Cynthia McKinney, center, and Clarence Thomas on the the right.

Workers re-establish May Day in USA

By Betsey Piette

In celebration of International Workers Day, workers participated in massive numbers in marches and rallies spanning the globe. From over one-half million filling the streets of Havana, Cuba, to three dozen migrant farmworkers walking the highway in Kennett Square, Pa., the message of working-class solidarity in the face of capitalist global exploitation was loud and clear: United workers have power and won't be turned back!

For the third consecutive year U.S. workers reclaimed their historic holiday, which originated with Chicago labor struggles for the 8-hour day in the 1880s. The dominant call this year was for full rights for 12 million undocumented workers.

In many cities opposition to raids conducted by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was linked with demands against police brutality after the acquittal of New York City police officers who fired the 50 bullets that fatally cut down Sean Bell on the eve of his wedding in November 2006.

NEW YORK CITY

Young and old of all nationalities, thousands of people converged on Union Square in Manhattan honoring International Workers Day and demanding full rights for all immigrants.

Participants included several contingents of high school youth who walked out of school to support immigrant and worker rights, and to demand an end to budget cuts in education. One contingent arrived at the rally chanting, "Workers of the world unite!"

The crowd heard speeches and cultural performances from the many communities that make up New York City, including the Haitian, Filipino, African and African-American communities. Feeder marches from Chinatown filed into Union Square.

One popular placard expressed solidarity with the family of Sean Bell. After the march ended at Foley Square, a smaller march converged on New York City's police headquarters to protest racist police brutality and the criminal "justice" system.

Charles Jenkins leads May Day march into NY Police Plaza to demand justice for Sean Bell, killed in a hail of 50 police bullets.

WW PHOTO: LIZ GREEN

WW PHOTO: ALAN POLLOCK

BOSTON

The immigrant communities of East Boston, Everett and Chelsea turned out demanding, "Stop the Raids and Deportations, Legalization Now, Justice for All!" The organizing was spearheaded by Gladys Vega and the Chelsea Collaborative, a strong immigrants' rights community organization.

Hundreds gathered at Central Square in East Boston and in front of City Hall in Everett, then converged on City Hall in Chelsea, where thousands participated in a spirited rally.

In East Boston, City Councilor Chuck Turner gave a keynote talk connecting immigrant rights to the fight against foreclosures, workers' rights and against racism. The march from Everett was led by Bishop Filipe Teixeira; Tony Hernandez of District Council 35, Painters and Allied Trades; and Chelsea Collaborative organizers.

Strong union support and solidarity was shown by SEIU and USW Local 8751, the Boston School Bus Union, which provided sound trucks and a spirited contingent of mostly Haitian rank-and-file members.

TUCSON, ARIZ.

The Indigenous dance group Danza Mexica Cuauhtémoc de Arizona led a march of over 2,000 people, including many youth and labor unionists, up South 6th Ave. to downtown Armory Park.

Speakers from high school and Community College Chicano Student Movement of Aztlan (MeChA) chapters condemned Arizona State Senate Bill 1108, which if passed would outlaw cultural, ethnic and women's studies programs at schools receiving state funds, and disallow cultural or ethnic organizations to meet at these schools.

Leaders of Tucson SEIU and UFCW spoke on the connection between Free Trade Agreements and the forced emigration of millions from Latin America. They urged support for workers at Tucson's Food City grocery stores fighting to unionize. Speakers emphasized the need to stop militarization of the border, say "No" to the border wall, end the building of private prisons and demand legalization for all.

WW PHOTOS: LAL ROOHK

DETROIT

Marching down the main street in Detroit's Latin@ community, the crowd grew to 2,000 demanding an end to the raids and deportations that separate families. Many businesses and schools closed.

Speakers included Baldemar Velázquez, president of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee; an organizer of the Washtenaw Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Rights, which is vigorously fighting raids; a student from the University of Michigan; and David Sole, president of UAW Local 2334. The event was organized by Latinos Unidos.

ATLANTA

Latin@s, immigrant rights activists and state legislators gathered at the Georgia State Capitol for an enthusiastic rally sponsored by Georgia Latino Association for Human Rights to demand, "Stop the Raids and Deportations!" and immediate, just immigration reform. The crowd of 300 carried signs with the messages: "Workers are not criminals!" "Legalization now!" and "We have a dream too!"

Georgia has imposed some of the most racist and right-wing anti-immigrant measures in the country. A law passed this spring by the Georgia Assembly would confiscate the vehicle of anyone found to be driving without a license. It is illegal in Georgia to obtain a driver's license without documents.

In **Carrollton, Ga.**, 70 people marched, calling for an end to raids and racial profiling. Although marchers talked about the atmosphere of fear caused by ICE agents coming to businesses and people's homes, they stated proudly that their march followed in the footsteps of Dr. Martin Luther King and César Chávez.

CLEVELAND

The Baldwin Wallace College FIST chapter in the Cleveland suburb of Berea held a May Day celebration and educational program. BW student Mae Haury spoke of the devastation caused by NAFTA. Martha Grevatt, a Chrysler worker and member of her UAW local's executive board, called May Day a holiday "not of rest, but of revolt." BW student and FIST chapter founder Caleb Maupin spoke of social revolution.

Don Bryant of the Greater Cleveland Immigrant Support Network reported on Arab and Muslim people being "disappeared" or deported. Armando Labra of Latinos Unidos described the separation of Latino families, prisons for children, and deportation of U.S. citizens when papers can't be immediately produced—an atmosphere contributing to the rise in Ku Klux Klan activity and that of other hate groups.

SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA

In addition to the huge ILWU work stoppage [See article on page 1], many other actions took place in the San Francisco Bay Area with thousands in the streets demanding immigrant and worker rights and calling for an end to U.S. wars against Afghanistan and Iraq.

Direct Action to Stop the War gathered at 6:00 a.m. at entrances to the Port of Oakland urging truckers and railroad workers to join the ILWU work stoppage. The unifying goal of May Day was on their banner: "The War Is Illegal, People Are Not!" In the predominantly Latin@ Mission neighborhood, Barrio Unido marched for "Amnesty and Open Borders."

Students at San Francisco State University walked out of class, protesting fee hikes. They stopped traffic and marched into the city joining immigrant and worker rights forces gathering in Dolores Park. Staff, teachers and students at the June Jordan School for Equity took the day off for a "field trip" and joined the rally.

The May 1st S.F. coalition organized the gathering in Dolores Park around the slogan "Workers United Without Borders." With everyone joining in, they marched through the streets of the Mission, chanting, "We are people, we are not illegal!" ending with a rally at City Hall.

The next morning, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raided 11 Bay Area El Balazo restaurants. Over 60 workers, accused of being "illegals," were "detained." This act of terror by an agency of the federal government underscores the very reason immigrant workers and supporters have continued to march on May Day.

SEATTLE

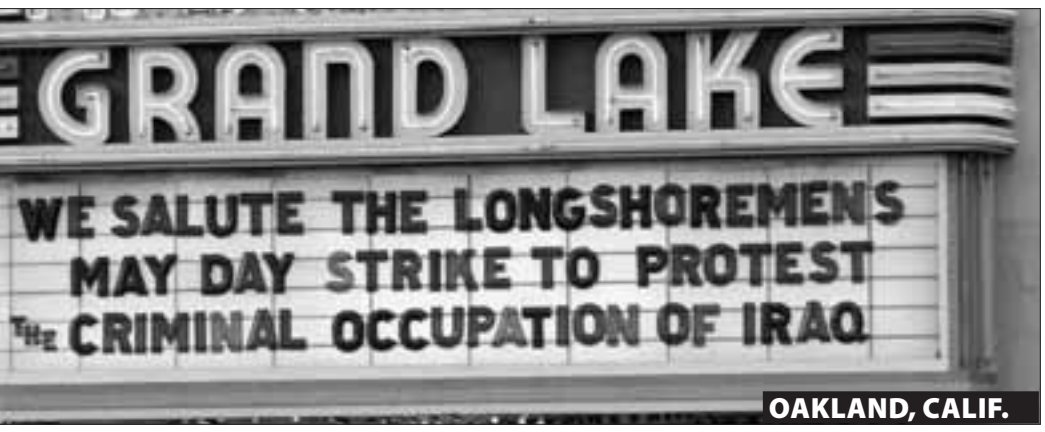
The waterfront cranes sat idle as the longshoremen's union (ILWU) went on strike against U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Waterfront companies reportedly lost tens of millions of dollars.

At noon, 3,000 workers marched two miles down the waterfront to Port of Seattle headquarters for a big rally. Longshoremen from Local 19, who turned out in the hundreds, were joined by members of the Inland Boatmen's Union and other unions, anti-war, and immigrant rights organizations. The action was a stunning display of working class internationalism with the workers of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Later 10,000 supporters of immigrant rights marched from Judkins Park, through the Asian community and into downtown receiving strong support along the way. The action countered the government's mass mobilization of military forces blanketing the country with raids, imprisonment and deportations of immigrant workers.

The mobilization's theme was, "We are not undocumented. We are not illegal. We are workers!" and "For an immigra-

A as day of struggle



OAKLAND, CALIF.

PHOTO: STEVE ZELTZER

LOS ANGELES

PHOTO: MELISSA KLEINMAN

tion reform with human, labor and civil rights!" The march, rally and boycott were called by The Committee for Immigration Reform and Social Justice.

CHICAGO

Some 20,000 people joined a massive demonstration for immigrant rights backed by more than 100 Latin@, labor, community and religious organizations, including the March 10 Movement and Centro Sin Fronteras. Elvira Arellano's son flew in from Mexico to address the crowd. Arellano and her family became important symbols for the immigrant rights movement. She resisted deportation for more than a year, taking sanctuary in a Chicago church until she was arrested last August in Los Angeles and deported to Mexico.

Other speakers included Hatem Abudayyeh of the Arab American Action Network and Richard Berg, president of Teamsters Local 743. Some 100 workers and family members from Local 743 marched together in the largest contingent of any union. Musical guests included Boots Riley of The Coup, Tom Morello of Rage Against the Machine and Ben Harper.

MADISON, WIS.

Around 700 people marched from Brittingham Park demanding immigration reform and immigrant rights in the streets and in the workplace. The labor movement and the immigrant rights movement showed a united front with demands for universal health care, an end to the war and the resignation of racist Dane County Sheriff Dave Mahoney because of his harassment of immigrant workers and their families. Mahoney is reporting any non-U.S. citizen, documented or not, to ICE.

Events began shortly after noon with the arrival of students from local high schools and the University of Wisconsin. Students chanting, "¡Sí, se puede!" were enthusiastically received among the crowd characterized by high hopes and positive energy.

Rally organizer Yvonne Geerts pointed out the challenge faced this year in organizing around immigrant rights. "Many families are afraid to exercise their rights due to the increase of raids and the general mood against immigrants." Miguel O., father of two, said, "At the end, we know there is no other way forward."

LOS ANGELES

Tens of thousands of immigrant workers and supporters marched along Olympic and Broadway in Los Angeles demanding full legalization now. This year's march also emphasized building unity among all pro-immigrant forces and their allies. The two organizations that had previously held separate demonstrations on May Day worked out differences and united with a common march and rally point.

The Olympic and Broadway march initiated by the March 25th Coalition was met midway by the MIWON march that began at McArthur Park and fed into the Broadway march. Last year the LAPD rioted at McArthur Park, clubbing and shooting so-called non-lethal weapons at peaceful participants. This year, however, due to the angry reaction by the community and the unity of both organizations, the LAPD played a relatively minor role.

American Apparel workers also joined the march with a feeder march coming from the American Apparel plant in downtown Los Angeles that was closed in order for the workers there to participate in the march. At the rally Larry Hales of FIST (Fight Imperialism Stand Together), Terrie Cervas of BAYAN USA, Carlos Montes of Latinos Against the War and John Parker of the International Action Center all spoke about the links of the struggles in the Philippines and among Black and Brown peoples in this country to the struggles immigrants and workers in general face today against U.S. imperialism.

SAN DIEGO

Organized by a broad local coalition called Sí Se Puede, approximately 500 pro-immigrant activists, overwhelmingly Latin@ youth, but also including a significant representation from area labor organizations including AFSCME and UNITE HERE, conducted a spirited march through downtown. San Diego being a border city swarming with Immigration and Customs Enforcement terrorists, this loud protest in defense of immigrant workers, both with and without documents, was highly significant.

Yet at the same time the downtown canyons were echoing with the chants of "¡Alto a las redadas!" (Stop the round-ups!), the docks on San Diego's harbor were uncharacteristically silent. Five hundred members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 29 were taking part in their union's successful effort to shut down all West Coast ports to protest the U.S. occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. Transnational giant Dole Fresh Fruit Co. complained to the media that the work stoppage at the San Diego docks cost them $316,000.

Downtown **Houston** saw nearly 400 marchers, including Víctor Ibarra, 38, who entered the U.S. from Mexico 15 years ago and remains undocumented although he's tried to attain legal status for the past seven years. "I'm here because we need immigration reform immediately," Ibarra said, wearing handcuffs and chains. "We need to be able to travel and be free."

In **Washington, D.C.,** immigrant rights groups and social justice organizations demanded that Prince William County, in northern Virginia, rescind its anti-illegal immigration measure. They also called for an end to raids and deportations and for establishment of worker centers in Washington, Maryland and Virginia.

Based on reports from WW bureaus in Philadelphia, New York, Tucson, Detroit, Atlanta, Cleveland, San Francisco, Seattle, Chicago, San Diego, Houston, Los Angeles and Washington.

SAN DEIGO

WW PHOTO: BOB MCCUBBIN

Dramatic student walk-out on May Day

By Monica Moorehead
New York

At the May Day march and rally in New York City on May 1, among the thousands of people who participated were a significant number of young, energetic people of all nationalities. Among this number was Latoya Deterville, a 15-year-old African-American student from Clara Barton High School, located in Brooklyn. The school is populated by more than 2,200 students and is rumored to be closing its doors permanently in the not-too-distant future.

Deterville had received a leaflet calling for student walkouts on May Day and was motivated to organize one at her school. When asked why she felt a walkout was necessary at her school on May Day, Deterville told WW: "I had helped organize a Student-Activist Council at my school to discuss the Sean Bell case, Darfur, budget cuts in education and how all of these issues affect us. The Council also put together a petition about making changes in our lunchroom, and was told by the administration that we couldn't do that. We are not allowed to protest. We are not allowed to do anything. Some of the teachers are upset with how we are treated."

Deterville and other students wrote a flyer calling for students to walk out of school during the sixth bell, or noon, and to come to Union Square on May Day for the demonstration. The school administration told them that it would be "illegal" for them to walk out when school was still in session and that those who did walk out would face suspension.

Deterville reported that the school principal stationed security guards at every exit of the school to discourage students from leaving at noon. But the students went to "plan B" to accomplish their goal. "Once we saw that the doors were surrounded by security during the sixth bell, some of us gathered together to organize before the seventh bell, which is 1 p.m. Once the seventh bell rang, about 50-60 of us ran out of the building, catching the security off guard. A friend of mine sneaked through the parking lot. We felt this strongly about being at May Day."

WW PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD

From left, LeiLani Dowell of FIST and Latoya Deterville of Clara Barton HS.

WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

Larry Holmes, who spoke on behalf of the Troops Out Now Coalition at the May Day rally, told Deterville that more student activists like her are needed and that her determination will certainly inspire many others to get involved in the struggle. □

MILLIONS MARCH ON MAY DAY

By John Catalinotto and G. Dunkel

May Day, or International Workers' Day, was celebrated with marches, combative demonstrations and sometimes open struggles all over the world. In the non-imperialist world, these actions focused on the great increase in food prices in recent weeks, in Europe on defending jobs and workers' wages. In both Europe and the United States, immigrant rights were up front. In the U.S. longshore workers held a rare political strike against war on the West Coast.

It was bound to be a day of struggle. In the **Spanish state** the call read clearly: "For us May 1 is an international day of working-class struggle. For this we will demonstrate to demand that the capitalists should pay for the crisis."

In **Senegal,** the Union of African Workers called for the "unavoidable struggle" with the government of President Abdoulaye Wade, urging the workers and people to throw the current government out.

While not an exhaustive report on every action worldwide, the actions listed below give a sense of the breadth of May Day struggles.

In the West Bank city of **Bethlehem in Palestine**, hundreds of demonstrators protesting the Israeli-constructed Separation Wall heard Dr. Mustafa al Barghouti, secretary general of the Palestinian National Initiative, denounce Israel's procedures that attempt to prevent the Palestinians from conducting any peaceful demonstrations. He said, "Such procedures will not intimidate us. ... [T]he Palestinians are stronger, and the ones that deserve to live freely and in dignity on the land of their fathers and ancestors."

In **Paris, France,** the two largest union confederations, the CFDT and the CGT, marched jointly for the first time in five years. Throughout France, there were 150 marches involving 200,000 people under the general slogan, "Wages, protection against inflation, for jobs, retirement and peace!"

Immigrants lead May Day in Paris.

In Paris, the CGT invited the undocumented workers—mostly from **Africa**—who have been on strike for legalization since April 15 to march at the front of their contingent. Francine Blanche, a CGT leader who has been coordinating the strikes, said "Who better than workers in France without papers to illustrate the Day of Labor and international solidarity?"

In **Havana, Cuba,** hundreds of thousands of workers marched, again this year without the presence of Fidel Castro. The main speaker was Alvador Valdés, the current president of the Workers Center of Cuba (CTC), the union confederation. Valdés reaffirmed the decision of the Cuban workers to continue on the path of Fidel, "the path to an ever more just, human and efficient socialism."

In **Caracas, Venezuela**, thousands of members of the National Workers Union (UNT) chanted, "Chávez, homeland or death!" as they marched to demand higher wages. On April 30 Chávez had signed a decree raising the minimum wage by 30 percent to $372 a month, which he called "the highest in Latin America."

The biggest open clashes between a repressive capitalist state and demonstrating workers took place in **Istanbul, Turkey,** this year. The regime arrested 530 demonstrators and used tear gas bombs against a half-million demonstrators in the capital. Their "crime" was in trying—this time unsuccessfully—to demonstrate in Taksim Square, where the police had killed 37 people on another May Day in 1977. The authorities also used tear gas, and arrested 96 people, in **Santiago, Chile**, where 20,000 people were demonstrating.

May Day in Manila, Philippines.

At a May Day meeting in **Durban, South Africa**, the S.A. Communist Party chairperson Gwede Mantashe said, "The [higher] food prices make the availability of a plate [of food] every night almost a luxury rather than a right and are a reflection of a system that puts profits before people. The oil prices ... are a reminder that the international rules are meant for the poor nations."

Workers across Asia focused on a campaign against high food prices in their May Day marches through cities including Manila, Philippines; Jakarta, Indonesia; and Bangkok, Thailand. □

Judge quashes references to 'death by taser'

By Sharon Danann
Akron, Ohio

On May 2, visiting Judge Ted Schneiderman ruled that Summit County Medical Examiner Lisa Kohler must change death certificates and autopsy reports on three men to delete any reference suggesting that Tasers contributed to their deaths. In each case, the judge had specific wording that he ordered the medical examiner to remove from the documents, with the requirement to substitute the words "accidental" or "undetermined" as cause of death.

A Taser is a stun-gun that delivers a powerful electric shock with the usual goal of incapacitating the human being it hits.

In the case of Mark D. McCullaugh Jr., who died as an inmate in the Summit County jail in August 2007, the order requires Kohler to delete the words "homicide" due to "multiple restraint mechanisms with beating and anal penetration," as well as any reference to death by "asphyxia due to the combined effects of chemical, mechanical and electrical restraint" from McCullaugh's death certificate and autopsy report.

Five deputies face charges for McCullaugh's death. Deputy Stephen Kendrick is charged with murder, the most serious of the charges, and goes to trial on June 16.

Judge Schneiderman's decision also puts forward an alternative explanation for cause of death for Dennis S. Hyde and Richard Holcomb: "excited delirium syndrome" or "agitated delirium." These are terms that do not appear in medical manuals, but have been pushed by Taser's advocates to describe deaths of people who become so agitated by drugs or mental illness that their bodies develop fatal cardiac arrhythmia during struggles with police. Taser funds research on excited delirium.

Hyde died in 2005 after three officers used Tasers on him. Holcolm died in 2005 after being shot four times with a Taser. Both men were on methamphetamines at the time. (Plain Dealer, May 3)

On Hyde's and Holcomb's documents, the medical examiner is being ordered to remove any reference to "homicide" or "contributing factor of electrical pulse incapacitation" and substitute the word "accidental."

Since 1999, more than 300 people have died in North America following police use of Tasers. Medical examiners cited the stun gun directly or included it as a factor in almost 10 percent of the cases, according to an investigation by The Arizona Republic. (May 2)

The ruling was in response to a suit brought by Taser International Inc., joined by the City of Akron, against Dr. Kohler. The company has sued other coroners, demanded judicial review of autopsy reports and asked coroners to reverse opinions.

Kohler states that she received an abundance of information from Taser, all with the objective to prove her rulings wrong.

Taser spokesman Steve Tuttle, who was pleased with the Summit County ruling, stated, "We will hold people accountable and responsible for untrue statements. If that includes medical examiners, it includes medical examiners." (Arizona Republic, May 2) According to Taser, more than 60 cases against the company have been dismissed. Others, however, are pending.

Dr. Bruce Levy, Tennessee's chief medical examiner, expressed shock at the Summit County ruling. "Judges should not be practicing medicine, and that is clearly what the judge is trying to do in this case," he stated. "I, for one, would never sign my name to reports that I did not write myself, or agree with myself. And that is literally what the judge is asking Dr. Kohler to do, which is to change her report and sign her name to something she, in her professional opinion, does not believe." (Akron Beacon Journal, May 3)

John Manley, of the prosecutor's office who represented Kohler, said, "Taser is quite a force to be reckoned with and does everything to protect their golden egg, which is the Model X26." (Associated Press, May 3) Taser's net worth leapt from $19 million in 2006 to $49 million in 2007. □

Justice for Sean Bell

As organizers in New York City declared that demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience to protest the Sean Bell verdict would begin this weekend, activists rallied in Buffalo, N.Y., to speak out against justice denied Sean Bell and all victims of police violence.

One after another, outraged speakers declared that the New York Police Department's murder of Bell was not isolated or random, that it happens in all U.S. cities, including Buffalo, and that here, as in New York City, justice is not colorblind, and the cops feel free to target communities of color. The rally called for community control of police departments to make them accountable, and for jailing killer cops.

—Report and photo by Ellie Dorritie

U.S.-supported 'referendum'

Oligarchs trying to break up Bolivia

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

On May 4, massive demonstrations of Indigenous people, peasants, workers and students took place all over Bolivia to protest an attempt by wealthy landowners and business heads to divide their country. These demonstrations got little attention in the international media emanating from the imperialist countries.

What they focused on instead was the "referendum for autonomy" in the province of Santa Cruz, which had been declared illegal and unconstitutional by the progressive government of Evo Morales.

The Indigenous people in Bolivia have been ignored, persecuted and exploited for 500 years. But today they are defending their rights, the unity of their country, and the national government led by Morales, Bolivia's first Indigenous president.

U.S. imperialism has been carefully orchestrating a divisive strategy in Bolivia that it plans to apply in other countries of the region as well, including Ecuador and Venezuela. Santa Cruz is one of nine Bolivian provinces. The vote for "autonomy" is meant to destabilize the Morales government and divide the country, much as Kosovo was separated from Yugoslavia. In fact, some of the same actors are busy at work in Bolivia. The current U.S. ambassador there is Philip Goldberg, who was instrumental in the separation of Kosovo.

PHOTO: GRANMA. CU

Mass demonstration in support of national unity.

Concentrated wealth

Santa Cruz, in the eastern lowlands of Bolivia, is part of the Media Luna (half moon)—a crescent that includes the provinces of Pando, Tarija and Beni. The Media Luna is also the wealthiest part of the country, generating 44 percent of the gross national product. A right-wing opposition to the Morales government is entrenched there, with its leadership centered in Santa Cruz.

Santa Cruz is the largest province in Bolivia, with almost one third of the national territory. Its capital, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, is the largest city in the country, with nearly 1.4 million people. Santa Cruz alone generates 30.63 percent of the GNP.

Home to a white European oligarchy, it is also vehemently racist. Many of the oligarchs are "latifundistas" who own huge farmlands that produce export goods like soy, rubber and cattle.

One of those landowners is Ronald Din Larsen, a U.S. citizen who has lived in Bolivia for many years and owns 141,203 acres in Santa Cruz. According to Bolivian authorities, Larsen doesn't even have a Bolivian registration or identity card, yet his family is actively opposing the land reform proposal of the Morales government that would break up these large estates and make land available to poor Bolivians. When Vice-Minister of Land Alejandro Almaraz made a recent visit to Santa Cruz, he was attacked by a gun-toting group instigated by Larsen, according to the news agency ABI.

Santa Cruz is where most of the transnational corporations have their headquarters. It also has the largest reserves of natural gas, petroleum and other minerals.

The province's business owners are organized in the Santa Cruz Civic Union, headed by Branko Marinkovic, a Croatian capitalist with close ties to the U.S. Embassy. Carolus Wimmer, national secretary of the Venezuelan Communist Party, told Venezuelan television that some members of the Croatian oligarchy in Bolivia had been expelled from Socialist Yugoslavia after World War II as fascist sympathizers. The Croats settled in several Latin American countries with the help of the CIA.

Marinkovic and Rubén Costas, the administrator of the province, are the leaders behind the separatist movement in Santa Cruz. Their armed wing, the Santa Cruz Youth Union, is a violent group closely allied to the Falange, a fascist organization active in the 1940s and 1950s that seems to be resurfacing.

In search of jobs, thousands of people from the highlands in the west have moved to Santa Cruz, particularly members of the Indigenous Aymara and Quechua nations. In Santa Cruz they face discrimination and often racist violence, perpetrated mostly by the fascist youth group.

Illegal referendum

The referendum on autonomy was illegal under the Bolivian constitution. Even the United Nations and the Organization of American States, no champions of progress, opposed the referendum. Gen. Luis Trigo, head of the Bolivian Armed Forces, publicly denounced it as affecting "the security and the defense of the Bolivian State." He pointed out that some of the articles establish local control over legislation, all transport by land, river, air and roads, as well as the airwaves, security and defense.

It is in fact a project to provide legal cover for setting up a new country.

Informal polls show that the majority of the people in Santa Cruz did not know the exact contents of the referendum.

In an effort to deceive, the oligarchy's media reported on May 5 that the "Yes" option approving autonomy won by more than 80 percent. In the U.S., the Washington Post echoed those numbers in an article that quoted Marinkovic as saying, "It's a historic day, and tomorrow we have more work to do. ... We have to determine a new course for Bolivia, and it won't be an easy task."

Morales, in a televised speech, said, "This poll, which is illegal and unconstitutional, was not the success that they hoped for. ... Between the abstention rate of 39 percent, the votes 'no' and the blank ballots, that is practically 50 percent." The turnout for the "referendum" had been low.

Interior Minister Alfredo Rada, in an interview with Telesur, stated that the elections were marked by "violence, confrontations and irregularities." He said some names were erased from voters' lists and 20 people were injured in confrontations with the fascist youth group. In a neighborhood called Plan 3000, a stronghold of the Morales party, the fascist youth picked a fight against the Indigenous and peasant residents, shouting racist epithets. The residents shouted back, "Get out fascists" and "Long live Evo."

People in Santa Cruz who support Morales had seized and burned ballot boxes in rejection of the referendum. In the process, they found many supposedly blank ballots were already marked with the Yes option. They immediately called the press to announce the fraud.

In a Telesur broadcast, Morales also accused the United States of funding the opposition. "The Embassy of the United States is the one that leads this conspiracy," he said, adding that "the U.S. ambassador is the great defender of the division of Bolivia, of the anti-constitutional attitudes, of those groups that do not want equality for our peoples, of the groups that want to steal from our country."

Articles from different sources mention that USAID and the National Endowment for Democracy have given million of dollars to the opposition groups in the name of the "fight against drug trafficking." (See, for example, www.coastalpost.com/08/04/18.html.)

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Hawaiians sit in at palace, reject U.S. occupation

By LeiLani Dowell

Rejecting the continued U.S. occupation of the sovereign nation of Hawaii, a group of Native Hawaiians has re-established its own government, named the Hawaiian Kingdom Government. On April 30, that government reclaimed the Iolani Palace, home of the last Hawaiian monarchs before they were overthrown by U.S. interests in 1893. The palace is now run as a museum.

About 70 members of this Hawaiian government arrived at the palace at 5:30 a.m. on April 30 and posted "No Trespassing" signs on the gates. Guards with the government, posted at the entrances, explained the action to visitors. They held the palace for six hours, while employees of the palace museum were sent home.

The Hawaiian Kingdom Government's Web site (www.hawaiiankingdom.org) states: "Since the Spanish-American War, 1898, our Nation has been under prolonged occupation by the United States of America. ... The primary objective of the Hawaiian Kingdom Government is to expose the occupation of our nation ... and to provide a foundation for transition and the ultimate end of the occupation of the Hawaiian Kingdom." The government is part of a broad sovereignty movement in Hawaii and has registered thousands of Native Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians as citizens.

U.S. theft of Hawaiian lands

In 1893, Queen Lili'uokalani of the Kingdom of Hawaii was overthrown by a small group of U.S. citizens and other non-Hawaiians who pretended they were challenging constitutional changes she was trying to make. That constitution, which had been forced six years prior—by threat of arms—on the previous ruler, Lili'uokalani's brother King David Kalalaua, had shifted power from the Hawaiian monarchy to the non-Hawaiian elite.

Hawaii was illegally annexed by the U.S. in 1898 and claimed as a state in 1959.

In 1993, a formal "apology" to the Hawaiian people was approved by the U.S. Congress and signed by President Bill Clinton. It acknowledges that the overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawaii was plotted by the U.S. minister to Hawaii. "Without the active support and intervention by the United States diplomatic and military representatives, the insurrection against the Government of Queen Liliuokalani would have failed for lack of popular support and insufficient arms," it states.

The "apology" further acknowledges that, "The indigenous Hawaiian people never directly relinquished their claims to their inherent sovereignty as a people or over their national lands to the United States, either through their monarchy or through a plebiscite or referendum."

Mahealani Kahau, head of state of the Hawaiian Kingdom Government, speaks to the media after occupying the ground of the Iolani Palace.

The illegal occupation of the Hawaiian nation has created untold hardship on the Hawaiian people, including a depleted population as well as the disappearance of their language—which children were not allowed to speak in public schools—and other aspects of their culture.

However, despite the apology the U.S. is loath to give any land back to its rightful owners, especially given the island nation's geographical location. Hawaii now serves as the headquarters of the U.S. Pacific Command, the largest U.S. armed forces military command in the world (www.hawaiiankingdom.org) and is the home to large Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine bases.

Resistance of Native Hawaiians to the political, military and cultural occupation of their land continues. A growing movement teaches the language to students so that it is not lost to history.

In 1976 Hawaiian activists occupied the Hawaiian island of Kaho'olawe, which had been used by the Navy for bombing target practice since the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. That struggle eventually led to cessation of bombing on the island in 1990 and the return of the island to the State of Hawai'i in 1994.

The Hawaiian Kingdom Government plans on returning to the Iolani Palace every day except the weekends, and conducting its business from the palace grounds. Mahealani Kahau, the government's elected head of state, said: "The Hawaiian Kingdom Government is here and it doesn't plan to leave. This is a continuity of the Hawaiian Kingdom of 1892 to today." (Associated Press, May 1)

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workers world editorial

The tipping point

Scientists these days are deeply concerned that the climate changes caused by global warming could reach a "tipping point" beyond which disastrous consequences would be irreversible. It is a scary prospect but one that cannot be predicted with any kind of pinpoint accuracy, just as an earthquake cannot be pinned down to happen on a particular date. However, the movements of the earth's crust that cause a quake can be measured and that a quake will happen within a certain broader time period can be predicted with great accuracy.

Knowing an earthquake is coming is not limited to the physical sciences. Social systems have their tipping points, too.

From the point of view of humanity, a social earthquake that sweeps away outmoded relations of production and property is a much cheerier prospect than environmental tipping points that could alter our ecosystem in ways that would put enormous stress on any human society. Let us hope that the social transformation comes while there is still time to undo the damage to the environment of the last 200 years.

What has caused this damage? Unbridled and unplanned growth of the means of production driven by the profit motive. Oh yes, we are always being promised that the next growth spurt of capitalism will end hunger, poverty, war, etc. But it never happens. The rich get richer, the poor get poorer. That's the nature of this system. Take the new, highly profitable industry of ethanol production. It was supposed to be the answer to global warming, but it is having the same damaging effect. It is deepening world hunger by causing food prices to rise.

Not that long ago, before capitalism became a global system, there were many societies that met their needs in a sustainable manner. The big difference is that people were not farming, hunting or raising livestock primarily to sell and make a profit, as happens with production today.

What are the chances that the working class, the vast majority in modern society, can eradicate the system of capitalism and set up one that is based on meeting human needs, but at a much higher level of science and technology than in pre-capitalist days?

Obviously, it takes a huge struggle to get rid of a parasitic ruling class that has, over centuries, used its wealth and influence to shape all contemporary social institutions to serve its needs. But revolutions do happen. In fact, they are as inevitable as earthquakes.

Of course, everyone wants to know, when will the tipping points occur? When will all the day-to-day injustices—the hail of police bullets that killed Sean Bell, the unbelievably racist callousness that condemned so many to die in New Orleans after Katrina, the mounting evictions for unpayable mortgages, the rising toll in money and blood of imperialist wars, the layoffs and cutbacks and poverty wages—when will it all bring about a new mood of struggle on a massive scale, in the same way that racist violence and segregation led to the upsurge of the Civil Rights movement?

Scientists shouldn't wait until tipping points occur to plan their response. The same is true for the progressive movement. Revolutionary politics are every bit as valid at a time like this as when the battle of the classes and the struggle of oppressed peoples for national liberation have become red hot.

In fact, now is the time to consider carefully how to build a revolutionary movement while at the same time fighting like hell to roll back all the attacks coming down against the working class and the oppressed. □

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Mistrial victory for FARC negotiator

By Tyneisha Bowens
Washington, D.C.

Bulletin: On May 6, the Associated Press reported that lawyers for the prosecution in this case filed a brief dropping charges of drug trafficking against Trinidad, a definite setback for the U.S. government and its ally, Colombian President Álvaro Uribe, and another moral victory for Simón Trinidad and the FARC-EP.

Another U.S. attempt to criminalize the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People's Army (FARC-EP) failed on April 21. Ricardo Palmera, former FARC-EP peace negotiator, received a mistrial in a federal case of drug trafficking.

Palmera, who was tried under his nom de guerre Simón Trinidad, was kidnapped from Ecuador and illegally extradited to the U.S. from Colombia, where he was imprisoned in 2004. Since his kidnapping he has faced charges in both Colombia and the U.S.

The U.S. has attempted to try Trinidad for "acts of terrorism" and drug trafficking in the past but has been unsuccessful. Trinidad has received two mistrials in the U.S., both due to a hung jury.

The kidnapping and string of trials against Trinidad were the latest in the U.S. attacks on the FARC-EP and the sovereignty of Colombia, in an attempt to damage the Colombian rebel movement and falsely portray the FARC-EP as a gang of drug traffickers, kidnappers and murderers. They are political maneuvers on the part of the U.S. government to strengthen its political and economic hold on Colombia by attempting to rid Colombia of resistance to U.S. imperialism.

This new mistrial is a political victory for Trinidad and the FARC-EP, further proving his innocence and disproving the U.S. accusations against the FARC-EP.

Angela Denio, of the National Committee to Free Ricardo Palmera and Students for a Democratic Society, responded to the mistrial by stating: "Once again professor Palmera has beaten the Bush regime in its attempts to criminalize a hero. This is the second time the U.S. government has tried to tie Palmera to drug charges and the jury refused to find him guilty. Professor Palmera's innocence is so obvious that the government's paid witnesses and informants can't even lie enough for anyone to believe them."

Trinidad is currently serving a 60-year sentence in the U.S., handed down in January after he was tried for supposed involvement in the FARC's retention of three U.S. Pentagon contractors after their plane crashed in a Colombian jungle. He is being held under inhumane conditions of solitary confinement.

In that trial, Trinidad had testified on his behalf after several witnesses for the defense were not allowed by the judge to testify. He spoke about his organization, the reasons that made him join the insurgent group—after the Colombian government had massacred hundreds of members of the Patriotic Union in the 1980s—and his recent role as peace negotiator.

The terror states of the U.S. and Colombian regimes have waged a war on the FARC-EP, including kidnappings and illegal extraditions, slander campaigns and violent attacks including murder. The U.S. government has a history of funding Colombian state terrorism.

On March 1 the Colombian military and police crossed into Ecuador, in a violation of the neighboring country's sovereignty, and bombed a FARC-EP camp. The attack killed FARC-EP second-in-command Raúl Reyes, as well as other revolutionaries and Mexican students. U.S. President Bush came out in support of Colombia's actions.

The struggle to free Trinidad continues and is part of the overall struggle for the self-determination of the Colombian people.

For more information visit www.freericardopalmera.org. □

Jesse Jackson in Haiti

Calls on U.S., IMF to forgive

By G. Dunkel

Responding to the raging hunger in Haiti, civil rights activist the Rev. Jesse Jackson, along with two dozen elected officials, pastors and community activists, visited Haiti at the end of April on a fact-finding mission.

They met with high-level political figures, like the U.S. ambassador, Janet Sanderson; Haitian President Rene Préval; parliamentarians; and leaders of the aid groups in Haiti. But the defining moment of the trip was a walking tour of Cité Soleil, an extremely poor seaside community of 500,000 people in Port-au-Prince.

Jackson said, "Today our walk through the slum, the suffering people sleeping on cement among vermin and rats and goats eating garbage—that will be a lasting memory."

According to a press release from PUSH, Jackson's organization, "Before the delegation left Port-au-Prince, they began discussing ways to provide children with school supplies in the fall and to convince Congress and the Bush administration to facilitate food relief." They are also going to push for debt relief for Haiti and for allowing Haitian textiles to be exported on a duty-free basis to the market created by NAFTA.

For months as food prices kept on rising, Haitians have been eating cookies made from salt, butter and brown dirt to stave off hunger, going days without a real meal. Finally, when food prices peaked in early April, hungry Haitians had no choice—they rebelled. As U.S. Ambassador Sanderson put it, "There is food available in Haiti but people can't afford it." In April, those in need took it.

Since the April rebellion in Haiti coincided with rebellions over food prices in the poor countries of West Africa, in Egypt and Yemen and elsewhere, the imperialist bourgeoisie decided it was time to get the U.N. to provide a bit of food aid.

They also told the food merchants in Haiti to lower their prices. The merchants agreed, but only for one month. A pound of rice in Port-au-Prince, even with the price cut, still costs more wholesale than a pound of rice costs retail in New York City.

And the rice sold in New York City might have been grown in the same field—owned by U.S. agribusiness—as the rice sold in Haiti. Haiti is the fourth largest market for U.S. rice in the world.

Thirty years ago Haiti exported rice and sugar, while the Duvaliers, father François

Somali masses escalate resistance after U.S. air strikes

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

Another U.S. military airstrike May 1 in central Somalia has intensified the determination of the people in this East African nation to end the U.S.-backed occupation carried out by the Ethiopian government of Meles Zenawi. The target of the bombings was the al-Shabab organization, which was the youth wing of the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) until recently.

A Somali military leader of al-Shabab, Aden Hashi Ayro, was killed in the U.S. bombings, along with dozens of innocent civilians in Dusa Marreb in the central region of the country. As a result of the U.S. attacks, an area the size of two city blocks was completely destroyed.

Several weeks ago al-Shabab was added to Washington's long list of "terrorists." The State Department described the organization as "a violent and brutal extremist group with a number of officials affiliated to Al-Qaeda." In a defiant response, a leading member of al-Shabab, Sheikh Muktar Robow, told the BBC in a recent interview that the organization "feels honored to be included on the list. We are good Muslims and the Americans are infidels."

"We are on the right path," Robow said, while rejecting the U.S. claims that his organization is in alliance with Al Qaeda. "We are fighting a jihad to rid Somalia of the Ethiopians and their allies, the secular Somali stooges."

In December of 2006, the United States and Britain encouraged the Western-backed neighboring regime in Ethiopia to invade and occupy Somalia. It was revealed at the time that U.S. Special Forces provided the military coordination for the invasion and occupation. The Somali intervention also provided a political cover for the Ethiopian regime to escalate its repressive tactics against ethnic Somalis in the Ogaden region of the country, who have maintained their struggle against the Western-financed government in Addis Ababa.

Somalia has been without an internationally recognized government since 1991, when former head of state Siad Barre fled the capital of Mogadishu. After years of political turmoil, which saw the direct U.S.-led occupation of the country between 1992-94, a grassroots Council of Islamic Courts began to rebuild the key areas of the country and restore a greater level of security.

COMMENTARY

The Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) is an independent, community-based coalition extending through various towns and cities inside Somalia. The U.S. administration has attempted to label the UIC as an affiliate of Al-Qaeda, in order to justify military intervention in the region. However, the spokespersons for the organization have denied such a relationship and maintain that it grew directly out of the needs of the people resulting from a lack of state institutions to regulate the distribution of services.

What the U.S. rulers found problematic about the UIC is that it was acting independently of Washington and its allies. When the U.S. government financed warlords to attack the UIC and its supporters, they were repelled. Later the U.S. administration ordered the Ethiopian regime, which is highly armed by the Pentagon, to carry out its bidding in Somalia.

U.S. policy creates worst disaster in Somalia's history

Since Washington engineered Ethiopia's intervention into Somalia in December of 2006, the humanitarian situation inside that East African nation has rapidly deteriorated. According to Philippe Lazzarini, director of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs-Somalia, some 2.5 million people are in serious need of relief. "If things do not improve within the coming weeks, and it is not likely, then we will be confronted with the images of 1991-92," when many Somalis died as a result of drought and starvation.

The so-called Transitional Federal Government (TFG), imposed by the United States and Ethiopia, has proven ineffective in providing services and security to the Somali people. Asha Haji Ilmi, the director of a humanitarian organization called Save Somali Women and Children, based in the capital of Mogadishu, stated that the situation in the country had never been this bad since the collapse of the Barre government in 1991. Ilmi said recently that "the destruction and looting of Bakara market and the printing of fake currency has led to hyperinflation," which has resulted in the refusal of merchants to accept this worthless money for the purchase of food and other essential supplies.

On May 5 mass demonstrations erupted in Mogadishu over the rapid increase in food prices. U.S.-backed Ethiopian and TFG soldiers opened fire on large crowds of women and youthful protesters, resulting in at least three reported deaths. The rebellions in Mogadishu reflect the growing crisis of rising food prices and distribution throughout the world. Recently, in Haiti, similar demonstrations held over a period of days resulted in the resignation of the prime minister. Additional unrest has developed in the West African nation of Senegal.

Imperialist plans for direct intervention

The British government has circulated a draft plan to the U.N. Security Council to send a so-called peacekeeping force to Somalia. (Reuters, April 23) At present the African Union has approximately 1,600 troops there from Uganda and Burundi. However, these troops have had a limited impact on the situation developing inside the country.

African Union member nations have been reluctant to send troops into Somalia amid the escalation of fighting by the resistance forces, as well as the growing popular discontent among youth and women over the lack of social services, clean water and food. Consequently, with the Ethiopian military failing to carry out the foreign policy aims of the United States and other Western imperialist states, the growing sentiment expressed by the imperialists is that a military force led by the U.S., Britain and Europe will be required to subdue the Somali masses.

The draft text of the document circulated by London asks the U.N. Security Council to "welcome" a report by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to replace the A.U. force with one sponsored by the U.N.

The document also calls for the office of the secretary-general "to continue its planning for deployment of a peacekeeping operation, taking account of conditions on the ground, and considering additional options for the size, configuration, responsibility and proposed area of operation on the ground."

In addition, the British document calls for the imposition of sanctions "against those who seek to prevent or block a peaceful political process, or those who threaten the [troops] by force, or take action that undermines the stability in Somalia or the region."

A companion plan is being drafted by the United States and France to deal with what they describe as "piracy" off the coast of Somalia and elsewhere in the region.

"We French and the Americans, with the support of the British and others, want to have a resolution on piracy," French Ambassador to the United Nations Jean-Maurice Ripert told Reuters on April 23.

He continued by stating: "We are in the process of agreeing among ourselves the details of the resolution, including the scope and the legal aspects."

Anti-war movement should add Somalia

People in the United States need to remember the disastrous effects of the U.S. invasion and occupation of Somalia between 1992 and 1994. The occupation, which was carried out under the guise of providing humanitarian relief to the people, resulted in attempts to disarm and suppress the masses in this Horn of Africa nation.

The people of Somalia, realizing the actual aims of this intervention, rose up and launched coordinated attacks against the U.S. military and its allies, including Canadian and Italian forces. During this occupation, several thousand Somalis lost their lives as a result of aerial bombardments of civilian areas, as well as targeted assassinations of Somali leaders opposed to U.S. policy in the region. These efforts were carried out under the rubric of the United Nations.

As a result of the resistance by the Somali people, the U.S. government and its allies were forced to withdraw their forces in 1994. Today, they are plotting to reverse this important defeat of imperialist military forces won through the blood and sacrifice of the Somali people.

The anti-war movement in the United States must raise the question of U.S. intervention in the Horn of Africa alongside its demands calling for the withdrawal of U.S. military forces from Iraq and Afghanistan. □

debt

and son Jean-Claude, received big loans from the World Bank for their luxurious living and to supply the Tonton Macoutes, the vicious security force that kept them in power. Over half of the $6 million a month Haiti pays to the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF)—scheduled to increase soon to $8 million a month—pays for the Duvaliers' loans.

Haiti is exporting capital to the wealthy countries of the world, which control the IMF and World Bank, while its people starve.

Since 1980 when the loans started to flow, its per-capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has shrunk by nearly 40 percent. Haiti became the poorest country in the Americas, and one of the hungriest countries in the world. Over half of all Haitians struggle to survive on $1 a day or less, 70 percent make less than $2 a day, and few poor people live past the age of 55.

The main reason why Haiti can't feed itself is that the World Bank and the IMF insisted as a condition for the loans they granted Haiti that it open its markets to the rice, corn and beans that U.S. agribusiness gets substantial subsidies to produce. These cheap imports drove local producers from the markets, which meant Haiti was at the mercy of the world market. □

The impact of Aimé Césaire

By G. Dunkel

When Aimé Césaire died in Martinique April 17 at the age of 94, he received a concert of praise and homage from the world over.

Césaire was a national political figure in France, who received every politician who aspired to higher office in his home, everyone that is, except for the current president Nicolas Sarkozy, whose party had taken a racist position on France's colonial legacy.

Césaire was elected mayor of Fort-de-France in Martinique and deputy in the National Assembly in 1945 with the support of the French Communist Party. He remained deputy until 1993 and mayor until 2001, although he resigned from the FCP in 1956.

He taught Frantz Fanon, anti-colonial author of "The Wretched of the Earth" and "Black Skin, White Masks," and influenced other prominent Martiniquais.

But Césaire's political career and teaching were just a small part of what he did.

As a student in Paris in the 1930s he met Leopold Sedar Senghor and Leon-Gontran Damas. Later Césaire said, "It was through Senghor that I met a whole continent. A land of which I had had no idea, other than an image very vague, confused. ... In bringing me to Africa, he brought me to the key of all that concerned me in my homeland. ... To understand Martinique, to understand the West Indies ... it was necessary to begin with Africa." Senghor was to become the president of Senegal.

When he met the African-American poets Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen, who had fled to Paris to escape the noxious effects of U.S. racism, he got a shock that led him, along with Senghor and Damas, to critically examine the process of "assimilation."

Beginning with an article in a 1934 issue of "The Black Student" (L'Etudiant noir), these three developed the concept of "negritude." Confronting an arrogant, insolent, conquering Europe, they wrote: "Negritude is the re-appropriation of ourselves by ourselves. ... Our negritude is humanist, is situated in history. Our negritude is developing our roots."

It was his conception of "negritude," of the connection of Africans in the Diaspora with their continent of origin, expressed in his plays like "The tragedy of King Christophe" and "The Tempest," his biography of Toussaint Louverture, his beautiful and politically strong poems, where the real influence of Aimé Césaire can be found. □

MUNDO OBRERO

¡Proletarios y oprimidos de todos los países, uníos!

Conferencia sobre Marxismo en Cuba

El imperialismo de salarios bajos y el potencial de la lucha obrera

Teresa Gutiérrez y Fred Goldstein, del Secretariado del Partido Workers World /Mundo Obrero, harán presentaciones en la Cuarta Conferencia Internacional Sobre la Obra de Carlos Marx y los Desafíos del Siglo 21 en la Habana, Cuba entre el 5 y 8 de Mayo. Aquí publicamos parte de los escritos de Goldstein sobre la clase obrera de Estados Unidos. Ambos documentos pronto serán publicados completamente en Workers.org.

Este documento se está escribiendo al principio de una crisis económica capitalista. Nadie sabe a este punto cómo terminará. Pero nuestra tesis no se basa en esta crisis actual o en ningún acontecimiento específico. Es parte de una visión de conjunto de los profundos efectos que ha tenido sobre la clase obrera la reestructuración del capitalismo mundial que ha estado en marcha ya por tres décadas pero que se ha acelerado en los últimos 15 años o más.

Extremadamente importante para la clase obrera es el cambio en la división económica internacional del trabajo que ha emergido en las últimas décadas.

Por primera vez en la historia del imperialismo, los arquitectos de la economía del capital financiero mundial están lanzando a los/as trabajadores en los países ricos y privilegiados, región tras región, a competir directamente por salarios con los/as trabajadores en las áreas con salarios más bajos. Trabajadores/as de piezas de automóvil en Detroit compiten con trabajadores/as de piezas de automóvil en México. Trabajadores/as del servicio al cliente en Phoenix compiten con los/as trabajadores del servicio al cliente en las Filipinas. Las/os secretarios/as legales en Nueva York compiten con las/os secretarias/os legales en Bangalore. Las corporaciones transnacionales han creado una pugna mundial por los salarios en una carrera donde éstos van disminuyendo como en una espiral.

Además, millones de inmigrantes de América Latina, el Caribe, Asia y el Medio Oriente llegan masivamente a los EEUU huyendo de la pobreza impuesta por el imperialismo y están sujetos/as a trabajar por salarios bajos y explotación extrema con muy pocos derechos y protecciones. La inmigración es una parte integral de la globalización imperialista y juega un papel esencial en el impulso de la competición por los salarios entre los/as trabajadores.

El marxismo nos enseña que es el desarrollo de las fuerzas productivas lo que no sólo crea nuevas clases y destruye las anticuadas, sino que bajo el capitalismo, que está obligado a revolucionar constantemente los medios de producción, el carácter y las relaciones de las clases existentes experimentan transformación constantemente.

Los resultados de la alta tecnología y los bajos salarios

Desde los albores del capitalismo, la innovación tecnológica se ha dirigido a aumentar la productividad del trabajo, es decir, aumentando el índice de explotación de los/as trabajadores/as. La alta tecnología significa que relativamente menos trabajadores/as producen más productos en un tiempo dado a un costo más bajo para los patronos. Unido a este proceso está el refinamiento de la producción para incorporar las destrezas de los/as trabajadores/as en las máquinas y ahora articulados en los software, robots, etc. La tendencia histórica es la de reducir las destrezas del proletariado y así bajar sus salarios.

En los EEUU hay hoy millones de trabajadores/as con destrezas altamente desarrolladas las cuales ya no son necesitadas por el capital. Se han despedido a muchos/as pero hay muchos más que vienen de la nueva generación de trabajadores/as que se gradúan de universidad o de escuela secundaria con las destrezas y las especialidades que ya no son requeridas por la economía de bajos salarios. Los trabajos en el sector de servicios que han absorbido el exceso de mano de obra en los EEUU, no requieren grandes destrezas y la paga está cerca de los salarios de nivel de pobreza. Mientras que la GM era el empleador más grande de los EEUU con 600.000 puestos de trabajo seguro, bien remunerado y beneficios sindicales, Wal-Mart es ahora el patrón más grande de los EEUU con 1,2 millones de trabajadores/as sin beneficio sindical quienes trabajan por sueldos míseros.

Esta reducción de trabajos especializados está añadiendo a la competición mundial de salarios y está nivelando implacablemente el estándar de vida que va en descenso en los países imperialistas especialmente en los EEUU. Una nueva situación está amenazando, algo que los/as trabajadores/as no habían experimentado desde la Gran Depresión.

Las familias se han ajustado durante las últimas tres décadas trabajando en múltiples trabajos para suplir los ingresos perdidos. Los/as trabajadores/as han sido forzados/as a aceptar salarios más bajos y la reducción o la eliminación de beneficios; han aprendido a vivir con menos; se han sometido a duras condiciones de trabajo; se han mudado o viajado largas distancias para conseguir trabajos luego que fueran despedidos/as.

Los/as trabajadores/as han recurrido a cantidades sin precedentes de crédito y de préstamos para poder sobrevivir. La deuda personal de los/as trabajadores/as se ha utilizado para diferir crisis personales, diaria, semanal y mensualmente en millones de casos individuales. Ahora se ha transformado en una crisis de la clase en su totalidad y es parte de la crisis económica general del sistema.

En estos momentos millones de familias le hacen frente a la posibilidad de perder sus hogares. En los veinte años entre 1984 y 2004 más de 30 millones de trabajadores/as perdieron sus puestos de trabajo permanente en los EEUU. Solamente dos tercios pudieron encontrar nuevos trabajos y dos tercios de ellos/as trabajaron por menos dinero, con menos o ningún beneficio. La inseguridad está creciendo.

Mientras tanto, EEUU tiene la población más grande en prisión en todo el mundo, desproporcionadamente negros/as y latinos/as, y cada año está creciendo. La represión, la brutalidad policíaca y el racismo se utilizan para reforzar la creciente desigualdad social que mantiene los salarios y las condiciones de vida de los/as africanos/as americanos/as, latinas y latinos, asiáticos/as e indígenas, atascada en el fondo de la estructura económica capitalista.

Las consecuencias sociológicas de la economía de alta tecnología y bajos salarios fueron precisadas por Sam Marcy en 1985 en su libro "High Tech, Low Pay" (Alta Tecnología, Salarios Bajos"):

"Es este cambio altamente significativo de mejor pagado/a a peor pagado/a que está cambiando dramáticamente la composición social de la clase obrera, aumentando grandemente la importancia de la susodicha composición étnica de la clase obrera, es decir, el número de negros/as, latinos/as, de asiáticos/as, mujeres y otros grupos oprimidos, particularmente millones de trabajadores/as indocumentados/as."

Este acontecimiento traerá a los/as oprimidos/as al liderazgo de la lucha de clases y le investirá la energía y la militancia que fluye de combinar las luchas contra la opresión nacional y la explotación de clase.

Hay importantes conclusiones políticas revolucionarias que se pueden extraer de estos acontecimientos. Hay un gran aumento de la clase obrera internacional sobreexplotada en los países oprimidos. Este proletariado que crece rápidamente está siendo organizando por la penetración y el crecimiento del capitalismo lo cual sienta las bases para las futuras luchas de clases. En el período anterior del imperialismo la exportación de capital sostenía la estabilidad de clase en los países imperialistas a expensas de los países oprimidos. En la fase actual, la exportación del capital está siendo utilizada por el capital monopolista para minar la posición económica de todos los sectores de la clase obrera en los países imperialistas. Esto está destruyendo la base material de la colaboración de clase entre el capital y los altos sectores del movimiento sindical y la paz entre las clases.

Estas presiones conducirán a una ruptura de la estabilidad actual y a un renacimiento de la lucha entre los/as trabajadores/as y personas oprimidas en los Estados Unidos que quebrantará la superficie de ideología reaccionaria y normas capitalistas y conducirá a luchas que no se han visto en los últimos 75 años. La opresión nacional intensificada, incluyendo la de los pueblos indígenas, y la opresión por sexo y género, están todas teniendo lugar dentro del marco de la creciente explotación de clase. Esto hará despertar la resistencia.

Hemos hecho este análisis no para quedarnos sentados/as y esperar a que llegue la revolución, sino para utilizar el marxismo como suponía ser utilizado, como una guía para un futuro revolucionario. Nuestro Partido está luchando con nuestros limitados recursos para estimular la lucha y para acercarnos a las masas en las primeras fases de la crisis que se avecina.

Estamos luchando por la solidaridad internacional de clase con los/as trabajadores/as desde la India a México que necesitan también de trabajos con buenos salarios. En la era de globalización, ésta es la respuesta a la competición mundial. Estamos luchando en defensa de los/as trabajadores/as inmigrantes, contra el racismo, la opresión nacional, contra la opresión sexual y de género como el único camino para conseguir la unidad de nuestra clase. Sobre esta base intentamos unirnos a todas las fuerzas antiimperialistas y comunistas en la batalla actual contra el capitalismo y en la fase próxima de la lucha para el socialismo mundial. □

Libertad para los cinco compatriotas cubanos gue defendieron a su país del terrorismo y gue ahora están presos en EE.UU. por evitar muertes en la isla. Fernando González, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Gerardo Hernández y René González.